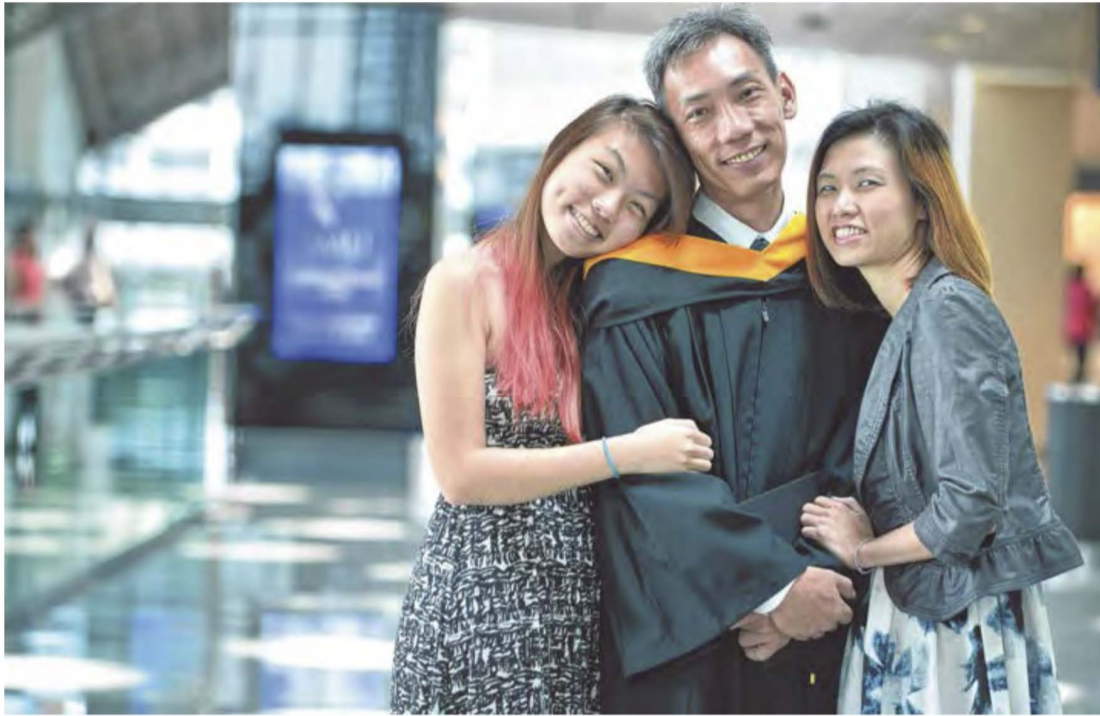


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Headline: Oldest grad to get SMU bachelor's degree

Senior military expert Eugene Low with his daughter, Daphne, 18, and his wife, Mrs Irene Low (far right), 44. Mr Low, who has 24 years of working experience with the SAF, said studying alongside peers 20 years his junior proved to be a challenge at first, and he "came on a little too strongly initially". ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG



Oldest grad to get SMU bachelor's degree

45-year-old SAF senior military expert is among 2,348 graduating this year

Toh Ting Wei

Among the crowd of fresh graduates waiting to collect their degrees at the Suntec Convention Centre, grey-haired Eugene Low could easily have been mistaken as another proud parent.

Instead, it was his 18-year-old elder daughter, and wife, 44, who were the proud spectators.

The 45-year-old yesterday became the oldest student in Singapore Management University (SMU)'s 15-year history to be awarded a bachelor's degree, after graduating from the School of Information Systems.

The senior military expert in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) said: "SAF was my passion and I went with it. Studying wasn't my passion then but, with time, I found that there is a need for qualifications."

Mr Low had graduated from Nanyang Polytechnic in 2007 with a diploma in Engineering Informatics. Both of his academic pursuits were fully sponsored by the SAF.

Despite having 24 years of working experience with the SAF, studying alongside peers 20 years his junior proved to be a challenge at first.

Said Mr Low, who has two daughters: "I came on a little too strongly initially, but I took a step back to let them do their work and help them along the way. They have brilliant ideas that just needed polishing."

One coursemate was 25-year-old Lee Xiang Rui, who graduated with a perfect grade point average score.

He also started a development studio with two friends during his second year. Among the applications it produced was Guess The Word SG, a charade game which has more than 200,000 downloads on mobile platforms.

Mr Lee said: "University is the best time to try out different things and, for me, I was open to challenges."

Mr Lee and Mr Low were among this year's 2,348 SMU graduates, its largest batch yet. A spokesman said one reason for this was the increased intake for SMU's postgraduate programmes.

Among the postgraduates receiving their degrees were the inaugural batch of 10 from the SMU Warriors Scholarship (SWS) scheme, which aims to ease the transition of retiring SAF personnel into working life outside. Eight new SWS scholarships were given out at an earlier ceremony yesterday.

Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, who was the guest of honour at SMU's commencement ceremony, urged graduates to not stop expanding their horizons.

"Look for mission and purpose in your work, build meaningful relationships in your personal life, and think about 'we', and not just 'me' in giving back to society."

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FULFILLING A NEED

SAF was my passion and I went with it. Studying wasn't my passion then but, with time, I found that there is a need for qualifications.



MR EUGENE LOW, a senior military expert in the Singapore Armed Forces, on turning his attention to academic pursuits